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ABSTRACT

Communication is essential to the establishment and maintenance of a democracy. Democratic society is distinctive in that civic talk plays a determining role. A long tradition of civic talk exists in western democratic civilization. The Greek teacher, Protagoras, the Father of Debate, required his students to speak first on one side of an issue or principle and then on the other. Greek youth investigated the controversies and the values of the day and learned that reason exists on both sides of an argument. For a society born in public debate and brought up on freedom of expression, educators have all but forgotten to teach communication. While most students receive 12 years of language training, little of it focuses on oral communication. Today's educators need to teach students to speak about the issues confronting society and community values. Students should learn how to enter into a reasoned discourse knowing that their reasoning could be altered or that they may persuade someone to adopt their point of view. Educators should teach the system of inquiry and advocacy upon which the United States was built. Every citizen should have access to information and know how to acquire it. Discussing and arguing relevant issues should be part of every subject in the curriculum. Numerous resources available for teachers who wish to include speaking assignments in their classes are discussed. (SM)

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THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION AND ARGUMENT IN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

by

Richard A. Katula

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THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION AND ARGUMENT IN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

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The philosopher Karl Jaspers writes,

> I do not know which impulse was stronger in me when I began to think: the original thirst for knowledge or the urge to communicate with others. Knowledge attains its full meaning only through the bond that unites human beings; however, the urge to achieve agreement with another was so hard to satisfy I was shocked by the lack of understanding, paralyzed, as it were, by every reconciliation in which what had gone before was not fully cleared up. Early in my life and then later again and again I was perplexed by people's rigid inaccessability and their failure to listen to reasons, their disregard of facts, their indifference which prohibited discussion, their defensive atttitude which kept you at a distance and at the decisive moment buried any possibility of a close approach.... No urge seemed stronger to me than that for communication with others. If the never completed movement of communication succeeds with but a single human being, everything is achieved. It is a criterion of this success that there be a readiness to communicate with every person encountered, and that grief is felt whenever communication fails (Kaufman, 1970, p. 147).

Jasper's words describe as succinctly as any I have

encountered the essential value of communication: to bring those in the society toward what Kenneth Burke calls, "consubstantiality," a sense of identification with and belonging to one another. That is, after all, what citizenship is about. Jasper's comments also point up the frustration we feel when what passes for communication is little more than cracking wise, shouting, or conspiring to win or end the conversation rather than to encountering it on its own terms.

Speaking constitutes our very essence as human beings. It is the way each one of us calls our world into existence. Each thought we utter orients us in a world that is not given, but is, rather, constructed word-by-word. Speech and reality go together. One of my favorite expressions, one on which I dwell in my own public speaking classes, is, "I am taking you at your word." It is a critical point - that what you say counts, for all practical purposes, as what you have thought, and as who, therefore, you are. And yet, students are often surprised by the notion, perhaps because they have yet to be held strictly accountable for their own ideas, or perhaps because students are not unlike the rest of us, who, unless constantly on guard, tend to take our talk lightly, remaining insouciantly unaware of how it is defining us as persons.

Speech is the most revealing form of human action. If I speak ignorantly, spouting opinion after opinion, others will think me ignorant. If my speech is laced with obscenities, sexist, or racist remarks, I will be thought by others to be obscene, sexist, or racist. If I speak continually, (and about

myself), refusing to listen or to yield to others, I will be seen by them as an egocentric bore. Such truisms are little more than common sense, but they catch us by surprise because we often forget that what we say is who we are.

Speech is serious business. It is our most basic form of encounter with the world and with others. It is through speech that we express our existential need for sociality. I like the way Gusdorf puts it.

> Humanness is not contained within itself. The contours of one's body are a line of demarcation, but never an absolute limit. The existence of others doesn't appear as a delayed result of experience and reason. Intellectually and materially the other is for each of us a condition of existence. The plurality of individuals, the fragmentation of being, appears thus as an original presupposition of lived consciousness.... In essence, language itself is not of one, but of many, it is <u>between</u>.... Through communication, it makes a new world, a real world (1970, p. 48).

We are here this week to discuss not just the multitude of voices, however, but also the quality of our speaking. Associated activity is a condition of existence, but true communal life is moral; that is, emotionally, intellectually, and consciously sustaining and fulfilling with some view toward a common good. I am reminded of Lieberman's Law of Communication: "Everybody's lying these days, but it doesn't matter because nobody's listening." Humorous as they are, these

words remind us that communication must be reasoned, moral, and ingenuous if it is to serve its end.

It is axiomatic in any democracy that the quality of the community is determined by the quality of each person's speaking. Plato long ago observed an isomorphic relationship between the individual and the polis. "The individual is wise," says Socrates in his Republic, "in the same way, and in the same part of himself, as the city. And the part which makes the individual brave is the same as that which makes the city brave, and in the same manner; and everything which makes for virtue is the same in both.... A person is just in the same way as the city is just" (Moline, 1978, p. 4).

Democratic society is distinctive in that civic talk plays a determinative role. The nature of the democratic idea, in its generic sense, requires that individuals have a responsible share in forming and directing the activities of the groups to which they belong and the values shared. In fact, a democratic society cannot progress without an identifiable and coherent public since it is the legitimizing agent for the truths the society holds, and thus for the decisions and actions of the individuals and groups which compose the society (Bitzer, 1978, p. 115). As parents are for the small child a reference point for appropriate behavior, so is the public for the individual citizen.

There is a long tradition of civic talk, public talking, in western democratic civilization. In fact, all the great western civilizations reached their zenith when the chorus of reasoned

voices was at its fullest, when speaking, both formal and informal, was given free reign. And in every case, training in rhetoric was at the heart of the educational system, serving the society by preparing its members for full participation in it.

In the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., Athens became the first democracy. Decimated by war and subjugated by tyranny, Athenians were challenged to create a new type of society, one founded on the concept of law and the will of the people. Once that democracy was in place, every citizen was expected, indeed required, to participate in it. The great statesman, Pericles, spoke to this principle of pure democracy in his Funeral Oration: "Each individual is interested not only in his own affairs," says Pericles, "but in the affairs of the state as well; even those who are mostly occupied with their own businesses are extremely well informed on general politics - this is a peculiarity of ours - we do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say that he has no business here at all" (Corbett, 1971, p. 232).

Affairs of the state, for the Athenian citizen, were affairs of the heart, and democracy was more than a political system; it was a spiritual bond. As G.L. Dickinson notes, "...public life as we call it was not a thing to be taken up and laid aside at pleasure, but a necessary and essential phase of the existence of a complete person" (1960, p. 72).

According to accounts of the day, Athenian streets were alive with speech. Botsford tells us that Athenian assemblies

rang with oratory and that the fundamental motive to right conduct was the good of the state (1922, p. 299). In their courtrooms, the true social center of Athenian life, the entire community participated in the maintenance of justice. Juries numbered from 500 to 2,000, and litigants spoke for themselves. On a given day, fully one-third of the citizens would spend their day listening to fellow citizens charge and defend themselves on crimes ranging from dog bites to desertion on the battlefield to murder. Kathleen Freeman tells us that to come before the court was, "... like addressing a public meeting" (1963, p. 16).

The ability to speak in this oral society, was, then, a necessity. Indeed, life and death might hinge on one's words. In the assembly, one's ability to speak might prevent or instigate a war; in the courtoom, the ability to speak might save or cost a life. Little wonder, then, that rhetorical training was at the very heart of Athenian education, constituting the entire curriculum of what we would regard as the secondary school and much of what we think of as advanced education (Kennedy, 1964, p. 7).

In a school such as that headed by the celebrated teacher, Protagoras, known to us as the Father of Debate, students were required to speak first on one side of an issue or principle and then on the other. Schoolroom exercises, of course, but through them and the discussions that followed, Greek youth investigated the controversies and the values of the day, and they learned that reason exists on both sides of an argument. Protagoras

provided for his pupils a lesson in didacticism as well as one in persuasion. "He will learn," Protagoras wrote, "what he came to learn; and that is prudence in affairs private as well as public; he will learn to order his own house in the best manner, and he will be able to speak and act for the best in the affairs of the state" (Botsford, p. 280).

The roots of Athens and its contemporary exemplar, England, are planted deeply in our own democracy, although in republican rather than purely democratic form. While it fell to Athens to invent democracy for this tiny city-state, to those who colonized America the challenge was to build a nation on it. They did so through the active participation of each citizen.

Drawing from its Greek and English traditions, American life is, at its best, a life of discussion and debate. To live in colonial America, perhaps in Boston or Philadelphia, was to be engaged in one continuous civic debate. No people thrived more on the give-and-take of public conversation, and to shrink from it was thought to be against nature's very intent. James Carey writes that throughout the founding years until the eighteen forties public life in America was, "a life of open argument and disputation, a life open to transients and strangers, a life of incessant talk, and, above all, questioning in the public houses that were the dominant institutions of early American cities" (1987, p. 9). Historian Samuel Bass Warner notes that each day merchants and artisans would gather at the coffee houses to read incoming newspapers and discuss prices. Life in colonial America opened into the streets

creating a unity of everyday life that would lead to the unity necessary to secure independence from England (Carey, 1987, p. 9).

In the quest for independence, it was oratory that won the day. Ours was no bloody coup or military takeover. Indeed, we waged war for our right of self-determination, but it was reasoned, ringing debate that brought the Declaration, and gathered for their signatures the leaders of every colony. Our very Constitution, the bicentennial of which we celebrate this year, was a document forged on the anvil of debates such as those waged by James Madison and Patrick Henry at the Virginia Convention of 1788. The American system, then, is indissolubly linked with the process begun in our founding period.

In the colonial schools, oratory and debate were at the core of the curriculum. Twenty-five years before the Declaration of Independence, students at Harvard and Yale presented original orations on a regular basis. In 1764, at the College of New Jersey (Princeton), seniors presented orations at monthly meetings designed for this purpose, and the Commencement program for Rhode Island College (Brown) includes forensic disputations in both Latin and English (Guthrie, p. 68). Societies such as Phi Beta Kappa utilized debate as a major part of their agenda. Between 1779 and 1780, for instance, the William and Mary Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa debated the following topics: The Justice of American Slavery; Whether an Agrarian law is consistent with the Principles of a wise Republic; and, Is Public or private Education more advantageous (Potter, 1954, p.

249). It was through this attention to speaking, both formal and informal, that a nation could be built on persuasion rather than violence.

In the 19th Century, having become a nation, the challenge for America was to become a people. As Malcolm Knowles notes, "The first educational task of the new nation was to transform an entire people from subjects to citizens - from a people used to being governed by an aristocracy to a people able to govern themselves." (Antczak, 1985, p. 56). Both public and private instruction in the schools carried over the emphasis on speech and democracy. The legendary William McGuffey himself declared in 1836 that unless every child were able to, "think without embarrassment in any situation in which he may probably be placed.... express his thoughts on any subject with which he is acquainted with accuracy, and without hesitation.... generalize his knowledge with rapidity, so as to construct an argument, or a defense, he is not educated, at least he is not educated suitably for this country, and especially for the West." (Borchers and Wagner, 1954,p. 289).

Many biographies of the period attest to the personal and public gain achieved through rhetorical training in the school. One young man wrote the following: "There was one thing I could not do. I could not speak before the school. Many a piece did I commit to memory and rehearse it in my own room, over and over, yet when the day came when the school collected to hear declamations, when my name was called, and I saw all eyes turned to my seat, I could not raise myself from it. When the occasion

was over, I went home and wept bitter tears of mortification." And yet, after joining the debating society at Dartmouth this young man became the prized speaker and debater of the institution, indeed, of the nation. His name - Daniel Webster (Schuyler, 1900, 3266).

But even more than the fledgling public school system and the universities of the time, it was the public speaking lecture circuit begun in the 19th Century that molded the people who inhabited America into the American people. Frederick Antczak notes that, "As the democratic audience emerged, institutions of popular education were developed, the most successful of which was the circuit of public speech" (1985, p. 7). It was through such popular educational movements as the Lyceum and the Chautauqua that America discovered itself.

Both the Lyceum, founded by Josiah Holbrook in 1826, and the Chautauqua, founded in 1873 by Rev. John Heyl Vincent and Lewis Miller, served as instruments of public discourse. Their goals were to diffuse knowledge, especially practical knowledge, exert a healthy moral and political influence, serve as a thrifty form of education, and have a beneficial effect on the public schools. During their heyday from 1840 to 1920, these two public lecture circuits served to widen the area of shared public concerns and hone the personal capacities of the audience. They served further to break down barriers of class and national territory by defining an agenda common to all members of the community. An entire nation was made relevant to its citizens. On a given night, under the Chautauqua tent,

sheltering perhaps 1,000 Pennsylvanians or New Yorkers, might come such luminaries as William Jennings Bryan, Thomas Edison, Eugene Debs, and Carrie Nation, each to deliver his or her own sense of American life. Ralph Waldo Emerson might engage the audience on the sacredness of private integrity while Gov. E. W. Hoch might bring them a "Message from Kansas." It was through this congeries of ideas that the American people became connected to one another by an identifiable thought and character - not necessarily agreeing, but for the first time recognizing that they were an audience for one another. They had reached a point, identified by Emerson, where to address others was to address a part of oneself.

Public debate was also instrumental in shaping the American public. Perhaps the finest example of a typical scene in 19th Century America is the Lincoln-Douglas debates, carried on in seven cities along the Illinois prairie during the year 1858. Through direct confrontation before large audiences of farmers, merchants, and traders, these two political foes raised the consciousness of an entire community on issues such as slavery, the place of the Supreme Court in the system of government, and states versus federal rights. As David Zarefsky notes, the Lincoln-Douglas debates embody the presentation of competing arguments in the public forum to a citizenry seeking to make an electoral decision. For Zarefsky, public debates such as those engaged in by the two giants of the prairie were, "as likely a path to practical wisdom as any." (1986, p. 181).

Rhetorical practice of the 19th Century resulted, finally,

in more than a reconstitution of individuals into a collective unity, and it accomplished more than shaping the American value system. Its ultimate accomplishment was to free the individual from his or her own ignorance in order that he/she might participate in the freedoms guaranteed by the constitution. It was through the communal building of selves and the drawing in of each individual to a distinctively American community, that lay the ultimate success of 19th century public education: to teach the pursuit of self-interest within the dynamics of a cultural ethic, as Antczak calls it, "self-interest, rightly understood" (p. 205).

That fabric binding the individual and the society in the 20th century seems to have unravelled. Early in this century William Ernest Hocking, chair of the philosophy department at this very university, called ours an "age of solipsism," a world which begins and ends with the self. John Dewey recognized in 1927 a people confused by an increasingly complex and specialized technology: "The ramification of the issues before the public," wrote Dewey, "are so wide and intricate, the technical matters involved are so specialized, the details are so many and so shifting, that the public cannot for any length of time identify and hold itself." Dewey proclaimed that,"Until the Great Society becomes the Great Community, the public will remain in eclipse" (p. 142).

Today, questions are raised whether there is such an entity as the public, or whether we have simply become a loose aggregation of self-interest groups led by professional seekers

of individual rights. Most provocatively, perhaps, Robert Bellah has suggested that individualism has grown "cancerous," threatening to destroy "The social integuments that join us together and without which there is little chance for a morally coherent life" (1985, vii).

In my own experience as a teacher of twenty years, as a political candidate, and as a participant in social movements, I too worry about the decline in civic engagement and awareness among Americans of all ages. I worry about the elderly couple on whose door I knocked during my campaign for the state senate, who told me, "You look like a nice young man, but we can't vote anymore, we're retired." I worry about the middle-aged gentleman who said, "Sure, I'll give you my vote, when's the election?" to which I answered, "Tomorrow." I worry about the woman who called my campaign headquarters to tell us, "If he can get the pothole fixed on my street by election day, he's got my vote." I worry about students who deny having heard names such as Adlai Stevenson and Hubert Humphrey. And I find myself agreeing with the American Federation of Teachers who, Edward Fiske reports, have called for a "special effort to raise the level of education for democratic citizenship" (1987, p. 30), a call I am sure those of us gathered here today would support.

I agree that our times are not like any times before, and that old solutions cannot be transported wholecloth to new situations. Lawyers speak for us in court and most of us will never serve on a jury. There is a dizzying information explosion and a sometimes indecipherable technology. I realize that

America is no longer a nation of small towns and park benches, and that we are, indeed, no longer a nation of European immigrants. I realize also that literacy in our time has come to mean the ability to write and read, and that, properly so, our educational system devotes a full measure of time to instruction in these two critical abilities. But I see also a number of basic similarities in American society today when compared to those mentioned previously. The individual self is still defined through communication with others; we are still a democracy requiring public knowledge and an identifiable audience to authorize decisions and actions. Orators can still heighten public awareness and shape public opinion faster than any other single human activity. I see yet the need for lively debate in our streets and public meeting houses and for speech that adapts ideas to people and people to ideas.

I do not see, however, similar attention to oral communication in our educational system, especially when compared to Athens or the America of yesteryear. In fact, while we now discover that our challenge is to reawaken civic awareness, we might properly say that it is a crisis brought on at least partly through neglect of that most basic ability: to speak articulately.

My opinion is that we have a communication crisis. We have forgotten how to talk to each other, and freedom has actually come to mean, for many Americans, simply being left alone (Bellah, 1985, p. 23). Our oratory too often has a hollow partisan ring to it. Our arguments too often are simply

strategies for winning. As recent revelations in Washington have revealed, even the Legislative and Executive branches of government cannot communicate with one another for lack of trust.

There is in our society nothing to compare with the rhetorical training given to the youth of Athens or early America. We have no public lecture circuit and those who do speak around the country are apt to be reformed criminals, recovering addicts, or stars of the latest soap opera. What passes for oratorical training is seldom more than one course in public speaking taught as an extra assignment by an English teacher; the debate club, where those already given to public speaking congregate after school; or an occasional Toastmaster's Club, where adults are taught how to sell a product or themselves rather than encounter others on the issues and values that revolve around us. In my own state, Rhode Island, speech is not even recognized as a part of the curriculum, and it appears only as a supplement or elective when it appears at all. For a civilization born in public debate and brought up on freedom of expression, we have all but forgotten to teach it. And we wonder what has happened to the public!

My thesis today is that communication is essential to the establishment and maintenance of our democracy. As Robert Bellah has suggested, "A public philosophy does exist in our common life, but it is both often badly expressed and only partially realized" (1986, p. 22). As educators, we must rejuvenate the public dialogue, teaching our students to speak

and having them speak on the issues that confront us and the values that sustain us. Most importantly, we must teach our students how to argue. As citizens, we must ourselves learn how to argue. We must learn, to use Martin Buber's vivid metaphor, "to walk the narrow ridge."

I begin this part of my presentation by recognizing that there is plenty of disagreement today and plenty of shouting at one another. Contentiousness is not our problem. We have our share of coercion also, unilateral argument, as Douglas Ehninger defines it, in which lines of influence flow in only one direction, and in which the sole aim is to secure compliance, not reach agreement (1970, p. 101). The commodity in short supply is reasoned discourse, based on the realization that there must be some dialogical tension between us and others. As Arnett says, "Unless there is an attitude that I may be wrong and you may be right, we will always have the crisis of polarized positions (1985, p. 15).

The narrow ridge is the position between polarized alternatives. It requires the arguer to embrace a position while remaining open to other points of view. A citizen of the narrow ridge does not take relativistic, nonjudgmental positions, but he or she looks at the multiple facets of an issue and learns from the opposition. Polarized arguments are often characterized by one-sidedness, and when questioned, polarized arguers do not often know what the position is of the other side. In public hearings at which I have spoken, the pattern is to walk into the hearing room and give one's

polarized point of view, never having had contact with the opposition or their arguments. The consequence of such practices is that when a third party makes a decision that is binding on the arguers no common ground has been reached, the result being simply another battle in another hearing room or another town. No conviction has resulted; no public knowledge has been generated.

Narrow ridgers always say, "The other person has some chance of persuading me." I am convinced of my own position only until a better one is available. Freedom and individualism must be tempered by a philosophy of the unity of contraries. If I know that I might actually persuade someone to do something or to take a position I favor, I proceed more cautiously because I now have a great responsibility. If I am open to the views of others, I proceed more cautiously because I realize that I might have to change my mind in the public eye. Reason prevails in such a situation, simply because reason is my best chance for success.

Ehninger comments on such a reformative versus disputative mode of argument. "The ultimate justification of argument as method," he writes,

> lies not in any pragmatic test of results achieved or disasters avoided. Rather, it lies in the fact that by introducing the arguer into a situation of risk in which open-mindedness and tolerance are possible, it paves the way toward personhood for the disputants, and through them, and millions like them, opens the way to a society in which

the values and commitments requisite to personhood may some day replace the exploitation and strife which now separates man from man and nation from nation (p.110).

I call today for a return to the system of inquiry and advocacy on which our nation was built. By inquiry I mean that every citizen must know how to acquire information and must have access to it. By advocacy I mean the right to persuade others to a position arrived at after due investigation (Windes and Hastings, 1965, p. 11). I ask that we begin a great debate in our schools; that we ask students to argue and to listen to arguments; that students face one another in every classroom on a regular basis. Having made my plea, let me turn to the practical matter of resources.

The Speech Communication Association publishes a number of documents designed to help teachers and administrators incorporate speaking activities into the classroom. There is, for instance, a most informative booklet available through ERIC, The Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, by Virginia P. O'Keefe, entitled, Affecting Critical Thinking Through Speech. The booklet is a handy reference for the classroom teacher or the administrator interested in oral communication activities, containing a number of ideas and fourteen activities involving reasoning, projecting, and predicting through speech. In addition, the National School Boards Association publishes a newsletter, Updating, which occasionally contains ideas for utilizing oral communication in the classroom. In one recent issue, for instance, Don Boileau

and James McBath describe a number of innovative approaches to teaching oral communication presently being used in schools around the country.

Many students begin in Daniel Webster's condition: so apprehensive they cannot speak. Help is available in this area also through a booklet entitled, Quiet Children and the Classroom Teacher, by James McCroskey, the leading scholar in the area of communication apprehension. McCroskey offers sound advice to teachers confronted by the reticent student, as well as a number of alternative ways to help the student develop oral communication skills without permanent damage to the individual. McCroskey has also developed a program for treating high apprehensive students, and it too is available through the Speech Communication Association.

Training in oral communication should be a part of every curriculum. While most students receive 12 years of language training, little of it focuses on training in oral communication. Ernest Boyer, in his recent book, High School, advocated one such course, noting, "The one semester speech course we propose would include group discussion, formal debate, public speaking, and reading literature aloud." The goal of instruction in oral communication is to let the student know how an audience feels about an idea; how well the idea was adapted to them and how carefully it was thought out. Writing is the essential tool for thinking through an idea, but speaking is the best way to find out how well that idea has been communicated. When a speech is followed by a question-answer session or a

discussion of some kind and then by a written critique, the speaker learns that an idea has a life of its own once it has been communicated but also that he or she has ideas that others will listen to and think about.

My own approach to oral communication instruction is based on the notion that students learn to think more abstractly and analytically through a process of gradual decentering; that is, through speaking assignments that move from the personal and subjective to the analytical and objective. (Moffett, 1968, 57). This approach is fairly standard in the discipline even though some texts use a dichotomy such as informative - persuasive to classify speeches.

Students can begin a course in speech telling a favorite story or reading aloud from a fable or fairy-tale. The story should have a moral and the successful speaker is one who communicates this moral to the audience. Learning from our experiences and the experiences of others is an important step toward learning to communicate. Moreover, an experience-based first assignment is less inhibiting and easier to deliver; thus, for those who have moderate apprehension, a narrative-based first speech will help them adjust to being in front of the room.

The second assignment introduces students to the concept of definition. The teacher provides a list of words that are often troublesome or confusing because of their meaning. Words such as "euthanasia," "karma," "peace," and "democracy," have worked for me, although I allow students to choose their own terms if

one strikes them - a student, for instance, asked if she could explore the term "serendipity," and she produced a bell-ringer of a speech as a result. This assignment is particularly helpful for discussions on values since many values are symbolized as abstract nouns. I have used such words as "integrity," "pessimism-optimism," "diplomacy," and so on. Students are required to think about their own meaning for the term and also to look for research on it, perhaps an essay or a poem written by someone else. They learn to conduct etymological research and through such investigation, they learn how the meaning of words changes over time. Students learn from this assignment that symbols have a subjective and an objective meaning, that connotations differ among individuals, that words are not things but guides to them, and, most importantly, that meaning lies somewhere between communicators.

The third assignment should be an analytical one, perhaps a cause-effect analysis of a controversial issue. In this assignment, students are not being asked to defend a position on the issue, but they are required to understand all sides of it. The issue analysis assignment works well with groups. A group of students might decide to do a symposium on AIDS, looking for its causes and effects and presenting suggested solutions to the AIDS crisis. Having analyzed the entire issue and having presented the information to the class, the student or the group might take a position in the conclusion of the presentation or simply remain neutral. Through such an assignment, students learn how to use the resources in a library and they learn how

to gather and assemble information, skills that are often needed in professional situations.

The next assignment is based on an analytical pattern such as argument. Argumentative assignments can be organized as debates, group encounters, symposia, or individual speeches, all of which are described in a speech text. Students must explore an issue, using reasoning and evidence, and they must fit their argument into a pattern such as a stock issues system (Katula and Roth, 1980, 183-196; Sheckels, 1983, 31-42). The argument must be based on evidence and reasoning and every argument must anticipate refutation by recognizing opposing points of view and possible disadvantages of the proposition advanced. By following a pattern that requires attention to opposing views and potential weaknesses in one's own position, students learn to walk that narrow ridge.

Arguments are a superb lead-in to class discussion on the controversies of the day or the values that underlie a particular position. Class discussions, if managed properly with guidelines established prior to the round of speeches, can lead to self-growth and public knowledge. I try to plan for as much discussion as speaking, and I have used active listening techniques such as requiring each person to paraphrase the position of the person with whom objection is being taken prior to stating the objection.

I offer this approach to the course as simply one way to organize it. There are many other legitimate assignments and appropriate course procedures. Any reputable speech text will

have an Instructor's Manual filled with sample syllabi and other course suggestions.

Oral communication should also be a part of every classroom. In the science classroom, students might debate a topic such as genetic engineering or vivisection research. In the social studies classroom, students might debate policies such as covert activity in foreign relations, restrictive zoning, or the use of federal funds to mandate drinking age limits. Even in the physical education classroom or the art class, there are controversies of a public nature about which students should be informed and on which they should take a stand.

Students might also be required to listen to speeches on television or in their community and write criticisms of them based on the criteria they have learned in the classroom. Magazines such as Vital Speeches provide a ready source of materials for critical analysis. By critiquing the speeches or the actual speaking of others, students learn through modelling, and, they learn to look past flashy delivery techniques to the substance of a speech.

In addition to speaking exercises in the classroom, I suggest that every elementary and high school teacher utilize group exercises or systems for calling on students that insure each student a chance to speak. One such idea is suggested by Jan Burke, from Terra Centre Elementary School in Burke, VA. Her system involves assigning each student a number on her roll sheet and then devising number patterns such as odd-even, to use

when calling on students. She also allows those who desire to speak to do so in addition to the students called on in the number sequence. According to Burke, "One gifted and talented student commented that this system is 'more interesting, because I hear what all students think.' I have used this approach in first, third, and sixth grades. It is an excellent way to ensure that all students are called upon frequently. By the end of the year the confidence and detail exhibited by students in their oral comments make this system a hit with students and teachers (1987, 7).

I understand that the material that must be covered in a class often precludes spending time on oral communication exercises, but I also understand the present day need for oral communication skills. I recommend to you the following criteria for active learning taken from O'Keefe's TRIP booklet on critical thinking in the classroom:

Frequent Speech

1. Every lesson is designed for an oral response.

2. Every student speaks every day.

Attitudes

1. Both teacher and students respect oral communication

2. Students are allowed to reach conclusions and draw inferences that are not predetermined.

3. Exploratory speech (speech that is hesitant or tentative) is valued.

Teacher Skills

1. Teacher uses open-ended questions.

2. Teacher prepares guidelines for oral activities.

3. Teacher has clear criteria for evaluation.

Student Skills

1. Students learn to give and receive feedback.

2. Students understand the objectives and tasks of group discussion.

3. Students experience leadership roles frequently.

4. Students learn to reason, predict, and project.

Speech Experiences

1. Students have a variety of speaking experiences: formal speech, drama, discussion, and informal conversation.

2. Students learn to formulate a variety of questions: probing, validating, and open-ended. (1986, pp. 17-18).

Great societies place high value on rhetorical training. Speech is both our most reflective and our most social act. It is the way we learn most immediately and most frequently who we are in relation to others. I began this talk with one of my favorite expressions on the value of communication by Karl Jaspers. I would like to close it with another favorite, this one by Isocrates, perhaps the greatest teacher in antiquity. I believe his words sum up all that I have tried to communicate here today. He says,

> In most of our abilities we differ not at all from the animals; we are in fact behind many in swiftness and strength and other resources. But because there is born in us the power to persuade each other and to show ourselves whatever we wish, we not only have escaped from living as

brutes, but also by coming together we have founded cities and set up laws and invented arts, and speech has helped us attain practically all of the things we have devised. For it is speech that has made laws about justice and injustice and honor and disgrace, without which provisions we should not be able to live together. By speech we refute the wicked and praise the good. By speech we educate the ignorant and inform the wise. We regard the ability to speak properly as the best sign of intelligence, and truthful, legal, and just speech is the reflection of a good and trustworthy soul. With speech we contest about disputes and investigate what is unknown. We use the same arguments in public councils as we use in persuading private individuals. We call orators those who are able to discourse before a crowd and sages those who discourse best among themselves. If I must sum up on this subject, we shall find that nothing done with intelligence is done without speech, but speech is the marshall of all actions and of thoughts and those most use it who have the greatest wisdom."

Thank you so much for your attention.

My thesis today has been that public speaking, both formal and informal, is essential to the maintenance of a free, democratic society. In order to understand and participate in this society, the individual must be an articulate speaker. My

challenge to you, then, is to produce citizens who are capable of expressing themselves in the public forum, who are ready to take the challenge of inquiry and advocacy, who are prepared to walk the narrow ridge. By so doing, you will be reviving a tradition central to western civilization, indeed, civilization itself.

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